

July 31, 2006

The Honorable Thomas M. Menino
Mayor - City of Boston
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Boston Wireless Task Force Recommendation

Dear Mr. Mayor,

It is with great pleasure that we present the Task Force's recommendation on an approach to implementing a city-wide wireless network.

To tackle this challenging but essential undertaking, the Task Force conducted a detailed analysis to understand the limitations of existing models. We researched the strengths and weaknesses of other cities' wireless initiatives, analyzed today's major technological trends, spoke with vendors and experts about cost and feasibility, thoroughly catalogued Boston's available infrastructure, and gathered information about technological needs and concerns of the citizens of, and visitors to, Boston.

In the words of a high ranking official from another major U.S. city, "[T]he effort which Boston has undertaken to understand the dynamics of this industry and create a viable and sustainable recommendation is as exhaustive as all the other cities' efforts before it combined."

The potential rewards of a wireless network are great. Cities that achieve low-cost, ubiquitous broadband will dramatically stimulate their economies, address consumer technology, and put themselves in a strong position for an increasingly technology-driven future. Government-facilitated private investment in broadband, combined with the power of community groups and local entrepreneurs, can add 1.2M jobs per year to US economy, according to a Brookings Institution Study.

But deploying a wireless network intelligently is not easy. As our research has shown, attractive short-term solutions can carry severe long-term burdens. Successfully addressing inequalities requires far more than simply building a city-wide network. Similarly, lowering the cost of access is not enough to meaningfully stimulate innovation.

Boston is world-famous as the city that saw the invention of the telephone, digital computer and Internet-based e-mail. That innovation continues today with our unique recommendation which has the potential to revolutionize communications and which has the vision necessary to achieve the compelling promises of a ubiquitous, affordable wireless networks.

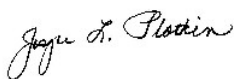
In order to best stimulate economic development, additional competition must be introduced into the marketplace for broadband. The Task Force has identified a new and highly disruptive business model that addresses a key bottleneck in the value chain for the delivery of broadband. Therefore, we recommend that the City facilitate the deployment of a carrier-neutral, wholesale network that is open to all broadband providers, entrepreneurs, and researchers alike. This network will be ubiquitous, with customizable bit plans that facilitate the development of innovative applications. Barriers to entry will be significantly reduced, resulting in the proliferation of service providers and business models.

If these predictions are accurate, the Task Force's recommendation will drastically lower the cost of access to end-users. Combined with increased support of existing programs, lowering the cost of access for every user will significantly reduce the digital divide problem without relying on cross subsidization that exists in most models today.


Broadband infrastructure today is just as vital for economic growth as transportation and electricity were in the past. Cities have always been in the business of facilitating the deployment of open infrastructure to advance private investment in applications. This recommendation is consistent with that theme.

For this project, momentum is critical. As Co-Chairs of the Task Force, we look forward to the continued progress of this important initiative. Thank you for the opportunity to serve the people of Boston.

Sincerely,



Joyce Plotkin
President
Massachusetts Technology
Leadership Council



James Cash
Retired Professor
Harvard Business School



Richard Burnes
Co-Founder & Director
Charles River Ventures